



Swamp Blues

Tabby Thomas, owner of the Blues and Heritage Hall in Baton Rouge, better known as the Blues Box, has become known as the "King of the Swamp Blues." His career began in San Francisco when, as a young man in the Air Force, he entered and won a talent contest against Etta James and Johnny Mathis. After his military career, Thomas returned to Louisiana to find that recordings he had made on a Hollywood label were doing well. He decided to move home and cast his lot with the Blues movement in Louisiana. It was a good decision.

For twenty-five years, Tabby has played and supported the blues throughout Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. A versatile musician, he plays a New Orleans piano style in the tradition of Professor Longhair and Fats Domino, and he plays lead guitar which is second to none.

Thomas has had a string of hit records, including the nationally famous "Hoodoo Party" and the Louisiana blues classic, "Candy." He is featured on many albums including "Rockin' with the Blues," "Blues Train," "25 Years with the Blues," and "King of the Swamp Blues." For almost twenty years, Tabby has run the Blues Box in Baton Rouge, a must for any true fan of Louisiana Blues. There, he encouraged the work of such famous Louisiana Bluesmen as Guitar Kelly, Silas Hogan, and Henry Gray. Thomas regularly appears at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival, and makes frequent trips to Europe.

"For me," says Thomas; "the blues is a release valve. A lot of people don't understand that you got all types of blues. You got happy blues you got some blues you have when you are sad, but the blues are not always a depressing thing. A guy can have a pocket full of money and still have the blues! Sometimes I will get up on the bandstand and I will be feeling real bad but, man--when I get to singing--I come down and I will be as high as a kite!"